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Report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Note by the Executive Director

The Executive Director has the honour to circulate herewith, for the information of participants in the twentieth session of the Governing Council, the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, as submitted to the Security Council and the General Assembly in April 1998.

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Fifty-third year

The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–6	3
II.	The sources of conflict	7–15	3
	A. Historical legacies	8–11	3
	B. Internal factors	12	4
	C. External factors	13	5
	D. Economic motives	14	5
	E. Particular situations	15	5
III.	Responding to situations of conflict	16–70	5
	A. Peacemaking	18–28	5
	Harmonizing the policies and actions of external actors	21	6
	Avoiding a proliferation of mediation efforts	22–23	6
	Mobilizing international support for peace efforts	24	7
	Improving the effectiveness of sanctions	25–26	7
	Stopping the proliferation of arms	27–28	7

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B.	Peacekeeping	29–46	8
	Lessons learned	31–34	8
	Roles for United Nations peacekeeping in Africa	35–40	8
	Supporting regional and subregional initiatives	41–45	9
	Ensuring a consistent approach	46	10
C.	Humanitarian assistance	47–62	11
	Humanitarian imperatives	49–57	11
	Special challenges of humanitarian assistance	58–61	13
	Relating emergency assistance to reconstruction and development	62	13
D.	Post-conflict peace-building	63–70	13
	The transition to post-conflict peace-building	65	14
	The priorities of post-conflict peace-building	66	14
	Financing recovery	67–68	14
	Working towards a coordinated international response	69–70	14
IV.	Building a durable peace and promoting economic growth	71–103	15
A.	Good governance	71–78	15
	Securing respect for human rights and the rule of law	72–74	15
	Promoting transparency and accountability in public administration	75	16
	Enhancing administrative capacity	76	16
	Strengthening democratic governance	77–78	16
B.	Sustainable development	79–103	16
	Creating a positive environment for investment and economic growth	81–84	17
	Emphasizing social development	85–89	17
	Restructuring international aid	90–92	18
	Reducing debt burdens	93–96	19
	Opening international markets	97–99	20
	Support for regional cooperation and integration	100–102	20
	Harmonizing current international and bilateral initiatives	103	21
V.	Summoning the necessary political will	104–106	21
VI.	Conclusion	107	22

I. Introduction

1. On 25 September 1997, the Security Council convened at the level of Foreign Ministers to consider the need for a concerted international effort to promote peace and security in Africa. The Council observed that despite the progress achieved by some African States the number and intensity of armed conflicts on the continent remained a matter of grave concern, requiring a comprehensive response. The Council requested that I submit a report regarding the sources of conflict in Africa, ways to prevent and address those conflicts, and how to lay the foundation for durable peace and economic growth following their resolution. In accordance with the wishes of the Council, and because the scope of the challenge extends beyond the purview of the Security Council alone, I hereby submit this report not only to the Security Council but also to the General Assembly and other components of the United Nations system that have responsibilities in Africa, including the Bretton Woods institutions.

2. Africa as a whole has begun to make significant economic and political progress in recent years, but in many parts of the continent progress remains threatened or impeded by conflict. For the United Nations there is no higher goal, no deeper commitment and no greater ambition than preventing armed conflict. The prevention of conflict begins and ends with the promotion of human security and human development. Ensuring human security is, in the broadest sense, the cardinal mission of the United Nations. Genuine and lasting prevention is the means to achieve that mission.

3. Conflict in Africa poses a major challenge to United Nations efforts designed to ensure global peace, prosperity and human rights for all. Although the United Nations was intended to deal with inter-State warfare, it is being required more and more often to respond to intra-State instability and conflict. In those conflicts the main aim, increasingly, is the destruction not just of armies but of civilians and entire ethnic groups. Preventing such wars is no longer a matter of defending States or protecting allies. It is a matter of defending humanity itself.

4. Since 1970, more than 30 wars have been fought in Africa, the vast majority of them intra-State in origin. In 1996 alone, 14 of the 53 countries of Africa were afflicted by armed conflicts, accounting for more than half of all war-related deaths worldwide and resulting in more than 8 million refugees, returnees and displaced persons. The consequences of those conflicts have seriously undermined Africa's efforts to ensure long-term stability, prosperity and peace for its peoples.

5. By not averting these colossal human tragedies, African leaders have failed the peoples of Africa; the international community has failed them; the United Nations has failed them. We have failed them by not adequately addressing the causes of conflict; by not doing enough to ensure peace; and by our repeated inability to create the conditions for sustainable development. This is the reality of Africa's recent past. It is a reality that must be confronted honestly and constructively by all concerned if the people of Africa are to enjoy the human security and economic opportunities they seek and deserve. Today, in many parts of Africa, efforts to break with the patterns of the past are at last beginning to succeed.

6. It is my aspiration, with this report, to add momentum to Africa's renewed quest for peace and greater prosperity. The report strives to do so by offering an analysis of conflicts in Africa that does justice to their reality and seeks answers in their sources. It strives to do so by proposing realistic and achievable recommendations which, in time, may reduce if not entirely end those conflicts. It aims to summon the political will of Africans and non-Africans alike to act when action is so evidently needed – the will without which no level of assistance and no degree of hope can make the difference between war and peace in Africa.

II. The sources of conflict

7. Africa is a vast and varied continent. African countries have different histories and geographical conditions, different stages of economic development, different sets of public policies and different patterns of internal and international interaction. The sources of conflict in Africa reflect this diversity and complexity. Some sources are purely internal, some reflect the dynamics of a particular subregion, and some have important international dimensions. Despite these differences the sources of conflict in Africa are linked by a number of common themes and experiences.

A. Historical legacies

8. At the Congress of Berlin in 1885, the colonial Powers partitioned Africa into territorial units. Kingdoms, States and communities in Africa were arbitrarily divided; unrelated areas and peoples were just as arbitrarily joined together. In the 1960s, the newly independent African States inherited

those colonial boundaries, together with the challenge that legacy posed to their territorial integrity and to their attempts to achieve national unity. The challenge was compounded by the fact that the framework of colonial laws and institutions which some new States inherited had been designed to exploit local divisions, not overcome them. Understandably, therefore, the simultaneous tasks of State-building and nation-building preoccupied many of the newly independent States, and were given new momentum by the events that followed the outbreak of secessionist fighting in the Congo. Too often, however, the necessary building of national unity was pursued through the heavy centralization of political and economic power and the suppression of political pluralism. Predictably, political monopolies often led to corruption, nepotism, complacency and the abuse of power. The era of serious conflict over State boundaries in Africa has largely passed, aided by the 1963 decision of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to accept the boundaries which African States had inherited from colonial authorities. However, the challenge of forging a genuine national identity from among disparate and often competing communities has remained.

9. The character of the commercial relations instituted by colonialism also created long-term distortions in the political economy of Africa. Transportation networks and related physical infrastructure were designed to satisfy the needs of trade with the metropolitan country, not to support the balanced growth of an indigenous economy. In addition to frequently imposing unfavourable terms of trade, economic activities that were strongly skewed towards extractive industries and primary commodities for export stimulated little demand for steady and widespread improvements in the skills and educational levels of the workforce. The consequences of this pattern of production and exchange spilled over into the post-independence State. As political competition was not rooted in viable national economic systems, in many instances the prevailing structure of incentives favoured capturing the institutional remnants of the colonial economy for factional advantage.

10. During the cold war the ideological confrontation between East and West placed a premium on maintaining order and stability among friendly States and allies, though super-Power rivalries in Angola and elsewhere also fuelled some of Africa's longest and most deadly conflicts. Across Africa, undemocratic and oppressive regimes were supported and sustained by the competing super-Powers in the name of their broader goals but, when the cold war ended, Africa was suddenly left to fend for itself. Without external economic and political support, few African regimes could sustain the economic lifestyles to which they had become accustomed, or maintain the permanent hold on political power which they had come to expect. As a growing number of States found themselves internally beset by unrest and violent conflict, the world searched for a new global security framework.

11. For a brief period following the end of the cold war, the international community was eager to exercise its newly acquired capacity for collective decision-making. Beginning in the early 1990s, the Security Council launched a series of ambitious peacekeeping and peacemaking initiatives in Africa and elsewhere. Despite a number of important successes, the inability of the United Nations to restore peace to Somalia soured international support for conflict intervention and precipitated a rapid retreat by the international community from peacekeeping worldwide. An early and direct consequence of this retreat was the failure of the international community, including the United Nations, to intervene to prevent genocide in Rwanda. That failure has had especially profound consequences in Africa. Throughout the continent, the perception of near indifference on the part of the international community has left a poisonous legacy that continues to undermine confidence in the Organization.

B. Internal factors

12. More than three decades after African countries gained their independence, there is a growing recognition among Africans themselves that the continent must look beyond its colonial past for the causes of current conflicts. Today more than ever, Africa must look at itself. The nature of political power in many African States, together with the real and perceived consequences of capturing and maintaining power, is a key source of conflict across the continent. It is frequently the case that political victory assumes a "winner-takes-all" form with respect to wealth and resources, patronage, and the prestige and prerogatives of office. A communal sense of advantage or disadvantage is often closely linked to this phenomenon, which is heightened in many cases by reliance on centralized and highly personalized forms of governance. Where there is insufficient accountability of leaders, lack of transparency in regimes, inadequate checks and balances, non-adherence to the rule of law, absence of peaceful means to change or replace leadership, or lack of respect for human rights, political control becomes excessively important, and the stakes become dangerously high. This situation is exacerbated when, as is often the case in Africa, the State is the major provider of employment and political parties are

largely either regionally or ethnically based. In such circumstances, the multi-ethnic character of most African States makes conflict even more likely, leading to an often violent politicization of ethnicity. In extreme cases, rival communities may perceive that their security, perhaps their very survival, can be ensured only through control of State power. Conflict in such cases becomes virtually inevitable.

C. External factors

13. During the cold war, external efforts to bolster or undermine African Governments were a familiar feature of super-Power competition. With the end of the cold war, external intervention has diminished but has not disappeared. In the competition for oil and other precious resources in Africa, interests external to Africa continue to play a large and sometimes decisive role, both in suppressing conflict and in sustaining it. Foreign interventions are not limited, however, to sources beyond Africa. Neighbouring States, inevitably affected by conflicts taking place within other States, may also have other significant interests, not all of them necessarily benign. While African peacekeeping and mediation efforts have become more prominent in recent years, the role that African Governments play in supporting, sometimes even instigating, conflicts in neighbouring countries must be candidly acknowledged.

D. Economic motives

14. Despite the devastation that armed conflicts bring, there are many who profit from chaos and lack of accountability, and who may have little or no interest in stopping a conflict and much interest in prolonging it. Very high on the list of those who profit from conflict in Africa are international arms merchants. Also high on the list, usually, are the protagonists themselves. In Liberia, the control and exploitation of diamonds, timber and other raw materials was one of the principal objectives of the warring factions. Control over those resources financed the various factions and gave them the means to sustain the conflict. Clearly, many of the protagonists had a strong financial interest in seeing the conflict prolonged. The same can be said of Angola, where protracted difficulties in the peace process owed much to the importance of control over the exploitation of the country's lucrative diamond fields. In Sierra Leone, the chance to plunder natural resources and loot Central Bank reserves was a key motivation of those who seized power from the elected Government in May 1997.

E. Particular situations

15. In addition to the broader sources of conflict in Africa that have been identified, a number of other factors are especially important in particular situations and subregions. In Central Africa, they include the competition for scarce land and water resources in densely populated areas. In Rwanda, for example, multiple waves of displacement have resulted in situations where several families often claim rights to the same piece of land. In African communities where oil is extracted, conflict has often arisen over local complaints that the community does not adequately reap the benefit of such resources, or suffers excessively from the degradation of the natural environment. In North Africa, the tensions between strongly opposing visions of society and the State are serious sources of actual and potential conflict in some States.

III. Responding to situations of conflict

16. Early warning mechanisms are widely regarded as serving an important role in conflict prevention but, without early action, early warning is of little use. The United Nations early warning capabilities have been significantly improved in recent years. The critical concern today is no longer lack of early warning of impending crises, but rather the need to follow up early warning with early and effective action. Whether the response involves diplomatic efforts, a peacekeeping deployment or a humanitarian intervention, the sooner action is taken the more effective it is likely to be.

17. When grievances arise, Governments and their opponents must reject the immediate resort to violence that is all too common. When violent conflict does erupt, a genuine effort is needed to exhaust political options, before such a confrontation intensifies. Before international action is required, I urge Governments in situations of potential or actual conflict to consider the appointment of special mediators or special commissions to look into the sources of the dispute, build confidence, and recommend practical solutions. Such efforts might include the involvement of respected persons from elsewhere in Africa or from the broader international community.

A. Peacemaking

18. The deployment of peacemaking resources is an essential part of any effort, whether national or international,

to prevent, contain and resolve conflicts. Diplomatic efforts are usually the most cost-effective and the most quickly deployed. Negotiation, mediation, good offices, fact-finding missions and judicial resolution may all be involved. The objectives include facilitating dialogue, defusing tensions, promoting national reconciliation, advancing respect for human rights and institutionalizing peace. Where a peace process is needed, it is the role of the United Nations, with OAU, to help create one. Where obstacles obstruct further progress, it is our role to help remove them. Where a basis for agreement exists, it is our role to help facilitate it.

19. Cooperation by the parties and their willingness to work towards peace can sometimes be nurtured by the international community if it is able to assist with short-term stability while providing positive inducements for longer-term reconciliation. Inducements might include, for example, local infrastructure and water projects, the provision of access to small business loans or basic medical care. To employ them effectively as tools of conflict resolution requires understanding people's problems in their full complexity and being able to respond at several levels simultaneously and with a certain amount of flexibility. Greater international support for such efforts is required.

20. Peacemaking efforts need to be well coordinated and well prepared. Within the United Nations system the recently created Executive Committee on Peace and Security, convened by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, is intended further to enhance cooperation, policy coherence and the sharing of information. Likewise, the newly established United Nations liaison office at OAU headquarters in Addis Ababa will consolidate cooperation between the two organizations and facilitate the coordinated deployment of political efforts to prevent, contain and resolve conflicts in Africa. This is also the objective of the annual meetings of officials from the United Nations and OAU Secretariats, jointly chaired by the two Secretaries-General. Cooperation between the United Nations and subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which are working actively to address issues of peace and security in their subregions, is also being strengthened.

Harmonizing the policies and actions of external actors

21. In many cases, both in Africa and elsewhere, the failure of the major external actors to maintain a common political approach to an erupting or ongoing crisis is one of the principal impediments to progress towards a solution. The adoption of a common stance by neighbouring States is especially critical. In the early stages, neighbouring States are likely to be the first ones approached as the protagonists search for allies and support. If the conflict is allowed to escalate it will inevitably begin to take on a life of its own, but neighbouring States and other external actors are likely still to wield considerable influence with the protagonists. Even when the conflict has further intensified, broader international efforts, such as sanctions, can succeed only if there is genuine cooperation and support of such measures by the subregion. The Organization of African Unity has a leading role to play in ensuring such cooperation and support, in conjunction with the relevant subregional organizations. In southern Africa, early and concerted political action by the subregion with OAU support has been used effectively to contain burgeoning political troubles in Lesotho. In West Africa, the eventual decision by ECOWAS countries to harmonize their policies and actions in Liberia was a key turning point in the peace process in that country.

Avoiding a proliferation of mediation efforts

22. It is critically important that international actors avoid the temptation to undertake rival or competing efforts, once a framework for mediation has been established. This is in no way intended to discourage the designation by Governments and organizations of officials with a special mandate to pay close attention to a particular crisis situation. On the contrary, the appointment of special envoys and special representatives can greatly facilitate consultations, information sharing and decision-making within the international community. This should not, however, provide opportunities for the protagonists to divide the international community, or to play one effort off against another. Invariably such an outcome results in confusion and delay rather than progress.

23. It follows that the selection of a mediator in situations of conflict must be very carefully considered and carried out with the closest possible consultation. In 1997, the appointment of a joint United Nations/OAU Special Representative for the Great Lakes region marked a significant innovation which may also prove useful in other circumstances. Two different but equally important examples of how cooperation might be structured are the support provided by the United Nations to the mediation efforts of Togo concerning the Bakassi Peninsula, and its support for the mediation efforts of former President Nyerere with respect to Burundi.

Mobilizing international support for peace efforts

24. Unless there is adequate international support for peace efforts it may be impossible in some situations to maintain the momentum for peace. The establishment of contact groups of interested countries, whether in the form of groups of "Friends", or a special conference as in the case of Liberia, can be effective in mobilizing international support for peace efforts. The Special Conference on Liberia was convened at ministerial level and brought together the ECOWAS countries, donor countries, the Bretton Woods institutions and other relevant parts of the United Nations system. The objectives were to mobilize international political support for the peace process; help to harmonize the views of the key external political actors; and ensure that the essential resource requirements of the peace process were understood and provided for. The utility of the Special Conference during the peace process has prompted suggestions that this mechanism be retained to deal with the challenges of post-conflict peace-building that now lie ahead for Liberia. I urge that equivalent structures be created in similar conflict and post-conflict situations.

Improving the effectiveness of sanctions

25. Sanctions, as preventive or punitive measures, have the potential to be an effective tool. The multilateral threat of economic isolation may help to encourage political dialogue, while the application of rigorous economic and political sanctions can diminish the capacity of the protagonists to sustain a prolonged fight. In particular, the imposition of an arms embargo can help to diminish the availability of arms with which to pursue a conflict by making the acquisition of weapons more difficult and more expensive. Economic sanctions in particular are too often a blunt instrument, however, applied without adequate prior measurement of their impact or determination of their objectives. In some cases, the hardship imposed on the civilian population is greatly disproportionate to the likely impact of the sanctions on the behaviour of the protagonists. Better targeting of sanctions is necessary to help ensure that they will achieve their intended purpose. Greater use should be made of sanctions aimed at decision makers and their families, including the freezing of personal and organizational assets as well as restrictions on travel. Where poorer countries that are called upon to apply sanctions are likely to face significant adverse effects, adequate provisions should be made to mitigate the consequences on local populations dependent on trade with the sanctioned party.

26. It is impossible to speak of the need for better targeted sanctions without also drawing attention to the need for much more serious enforcement of sanctions by the international community. Where arms embargoes are imposed it is necessary for countries not only to refrain from official transactions but also to seek to discourage their nationals or corporations from violating such sanctions. To enhance the effectiveness of international sanctions regimes, I call upon Member States individually to adopt legislation making the violation of a Security Council arms embargo a criminal offence under their national laws.

Stopping the proliferation of arms

27. All States have the right and responsibility to provide for their own defence. Africa's compelling development interests nonetheless require that a minimum of resources be diverted for military purposes. African States can help to diminish the need for large military expenditures by implementing transparency and confidence-building measures in the military and security fields – including the signing of non-aggression pacts and security cooperation agreements, participation in joint military training exercises and patrols, and the harmonization of policies against illicit arms trafficking. In 1997 only eight African countries provided information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. I urge all African countries to participate in the Register, in a manner that will make a positive contribution to regional and subregional confidence-building efforts. These could include the establishment of supplementary subregional registers of conventional arms. Furthermore, in order to diminish the threat which the proliferation of small arms poses for Africa, I call upon African countries to agree to reduce their purchases of arms and munitions to below 1.5 per cent of GDP, and to commit themselves to a zero-growth policy for defence budgets for a period of 10 years.

28. Identifying the sources of arms flows into Africa is critical to any effort to monitor or regulate this trade. Arms exporting countries have a responsibility to exercise restraint, especially with respect to the export of weapons into zones of conflict or tension in Africa. Particularly close attention needs to be paid to the role of private arms merchants in supplying weapons to areas of actual or potential conflict. The goal of public identification of international arms merchants and their activities has proved elusive, but perhaps no other single initiative would do more to help combat the flow of illicit arms to Africa – a trade that is made possible largely by the secrecy that surrounds it. The Security Council should address itself to this issue as a matter of urgency, including the role the United Nations

might play in compiling, tracking and publicizing such information.

B. Peacekeeping

29. Historically, the United Nations has deployed more of its peacekeeping operations in Africa than in any other single region. Following a decline in international tensions, the deployment in 1989 of operations in Angola and Namibia began a new era of complex, post-cold-war peacekeeping. Of the 32 operations launched by the United Nations during the succeeding nine years, 13 were deployed in Africa. Yet following the serious setback suffered by the United Nations in Somalia, and the bitter experience endured in the former Yugoslavia, the international community has shown great reluctance in recent years to assume the political and financial exposure associated with deploying peacekeeping operations. This reluctance appears to go well beyond the lessons that Somalia offers, and it has had a particularly harsh impact upon Africa.

30. In addition to the terrible price paid in Rwanda, the broader costs of paralysis can be seen in the reaction by some African Governments, especially in the Great Lakes region, to marginalize the United Nations from further political involvement in the region's affairs. The credibility of the United Nations in Africa to a great extent depends upon the international community's willingness to act and to explore new means of advancing the objectives of peace and security on the continent. It is important therefore, that the United Nations experience in Africa be re-examined and lessons extracted that can guide us for the future.

Lessons learned

31. The international community's perception of peacekeeping has been greatly shaped by the United Nations experience in Somalia. The memories of that operation continue to hobble the United Nations capacity to respond swiftly and decisively to crises. While the civilian population in Somalia derived significant benefits from the United Nations involvement, including the end of starvation, the United Nations Operation in Somalia was also the first United Nations operation to be withdrawn by the Security Council before completing its mission. The Security Council based that decision on the fact that, despite the operation's humanitarian accomplishments, no political progress had been made because of lack of commitment on the part of key Somali factions not interested in a settlement.

32. The consequences of the retreat from Somalia and the reluctance to again commit international resources and political capital soon became evident as the international community agonized over how to respond to the tragedy that began to unfold in Rwanda. Hundreds of thousands of lives were lost in the course of the genocide that was perpetrated in full view of the international community. That experience highlighted the crucial importance of swift intervention in a conflict and, above all, of political will to act in the face of a catastrophe. The horrifying suffering of the Rwandan people sends the clear and unmistakable message that the international community must never again tolerate such inaction.

33. A positive lesson was drawn from the United Nations Operation in Mozambique. There, the United Nations influence was augmented through constant dialogue with the parties on the ground and with other States. The operation became a conduit for international resources, and a binding element for international action – a focal point, a symbol and a catalyst for efforts for peace. The United Nations experience in Mozambique showed that, in the right circumstances, peacekeeping operations can offer a flexible and uniquely adapted means to confront conflict in Africa. Its success testifies to the contribution that the United Nations can make as an impartial and legitimate actor for peace. It also indicates the Organization's potential to strengthen and direct international engagement within a conflict that might otherwise be exacerbated by negligence or by manipulation from outside, and the extent to which unanimity of purpose and willingness to act in a coherent manner can enhance the authority of the international community.

34. The successive United Nations deployments in Angola have shown the vital role that can be played by a United Nations operation in sustaining a peace process in even the most adverse circumstances, but they have also indicated the crucial need for realistic peace agreements, and the importance of having a credible deterrent capacity within a peacekeeping operation in situations that remain dangerous and volatile. The ongoing risk of conflict has demonstrated, further, how access to resources by warring parties can foster violence, and has highlighted the impact that international business interests can have on the success or failure of peace efforts.

Roles for United Nations peacekeeping in Africa

35. United Nations peacekeeping will not always be the best answer to every problem, either in Africa or elsewhere. Without the agreement of the protagonists, for example, the

cooperation and support needed on the ground for peacekeeping will be lacking. A peacekeeping deployment in such circumstances might even be counterproductive, side-tracking other efforts to take more forceful action or creating the erroneous impression that action is being taken to stop the conflict rather than merely mitigate its symptoms. In the right conditions, however, United Nations peacekeeping operations can make the difference between peace and war in Africa. The recent experience of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium shows what United Nations peacekeeping can achieve even in the most challenging environment when it is deployed with a credible deterrent capacity, equipped with appropriate resources, and backed by sufficient political will. In Africa, peacekeeping has already played a wide-ranging series of roles in promoting an end to conflict. No catalogue of such roles can be viewed as exhaustive, and the Security Council will need to consider each challenge afresh and tailor a response that best fits the particular circumstances.

36. *Separating the protagonists and monitoring their conduct.* Operations of this type function on the basis of a limited agreement or understanding between the parties. They monitor ceasefires and by their presence enable combatants to pull back to a safe distance from each other, where passions may cool and an atmosphere conducive to negotiations may be created. Such operations can be a critical confidence-building measure in difficult situations.

37. *Implementation of comprehensive settlements.* In Africa, the United Nations has deployed a number of complex, multidimensional peacekeeping operations incorporating a wide range of civilian elements. Largely successful operations of this type were carried out in Angola, Mozambique and Namibia. Where a comprehensive settlement to a conflict has been reached the deployment of a multidisciplinary peacekeeping operation may well represent the best chance to establish peace and build a foundation for lasting development, based on respect for human rights and the rehabilitation of civic institutions. Where such opportunities arise, the international community should provide its support, demonstrating its commitment to peace in a tangible way.

38. *Preventive deployment.* It is important not merely to address conflict, but also to try to prevent it. Taking action in a timely manner is critical. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the United Nations successfully deployed a peacekeeping operation before conflict occurred – the first preventive deployment of United Nations peacekeepers. By providing a reassuring presence and a certain amount of transparency, such a deployment can prevent the type of miscalculations that can lead to violent conflict, allow time for grievances to be settled through political channels, make it possible to strengthen peace-building institutions and be a critical confidence-building measure for peace.

39. Preventive deployment is a pro-active response to the threat of conflict. In Africa, as elsewhere, it can make a major difference. The international community faces such an opportunity now in the Central African Republic, where an explosive situation has been contained by African mediation efforts, local perseverance and an African security force, the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), supported by France and the United Nations Development Programme. When the MISAB mandate expires and that support is withdrawn, the only viable option for the maintenance of stability in the Central African Republic is the establishment and deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation. All parties within the country and all countries in the region are agreed that without a credible external force violence will return. The Security Council's recent decision to authorize the deployment of such a force sends a positive and important signal to the region and to Africa as a whole.

40. *Protecting humanitarian interests.* Humanitarian agencies endeavour to provide support to civilian victims of war wherever they may be. Too often, however, the warring parties, one or more of which may be irregular militias or self-proclaimed authorities, make it difficult or impossible for them to do so. This is sometimes because of the exigencies of war, but more often because the relief of a particular population is contrary to the war aims of one or another of the parties. There is also a growing tendency for the combatants to divert relief supplies for their own purposes. Humanitarian actors have worked with peacekeepers, and independently of them, to negotiate access and defend humanitarian principles. However, the unprecedented difficulties arising from the operations in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia illustrate the magnitude of the challenges and dangers posed for peacekeepers and humanitarian workers operating in a hostile environment without the consent or support of all of the parties.

Supporting regional and subregional initiatives

41. Within the context of the United Nations primary responsibility for matters of international peace and security, providing support for regional and subregional initiatives in Africa is both necessary and desirable. Such support is necessary because the United Nations lacks the capacity,

resources and expertise to address all problems that may arise in Africa. It is desirable because wherever possible the international community should strive to complement rather than supplant African efforts to resolve Africa's problems. In recent years there have been a number of new African initiatives to resolve disputes that have long plagued particular areas or to tackle new conflicts before they can expand and escalate beyond control. While not all of those endeavours have been successful, the political leaders of Africa have persevered and the peoples of Africa deserve the support of the international community.

42. *Authorizing the use of forceful action.* Within modern conflicts the recurrent characteristics of fractured lines of authority, civilian suffering and involvement of militias have meant that intervention to promote peace has frequently entailed tasks that require forceful action and may incur significant danger. Where significant force is likely to be required the Security Council has in recent years frequently chosen to authorize action by willing Member States or coalitions of States. This has been the case, for example, in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haiti, Iraq and Somalia. The obligation to obtain Security Council authorization prior to the use of force is clear; but while authorizing forceful action by Member States or coalitions of States can sometimes be an effective response to such situations, it also raises many questions for the future, particularly the need to enhance the Council's ability to monitor activities that have been authorized.

43. *Co-deploying with regional, subregional or multinational forces.* One means of monitoring the activities of a multinational force while also contributing to the broader aspects of a peace process was demonstrated in Liberia. A small unarmed force of United Nations military observers was co-deployed alongside the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), its mandate being to work with the subregional force in the implementation of the Peace Agreement. In accordance with the Peace Agreement, ECOMOG had primary responsibility for ensuring implementation while the role of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) was to monitor the implementation procedures in order to verify their impartial application. Political, humanitarian and electoral components were also established in UNOMIL, later followed by a human rights component.

44. The collaboration with ECOMOG succeeded in helping to restore peace in Liberia. It is a case of cooperation between the United Nations and a subregional organization that might be applicable to other situations as well. We should not, however, draw the conclusion that such responsibilities can henceforth be delegated solely to regional organizations, either in Africa or elsewhere. Delegation does not represent a panacea for the difficult problems facing peacekeeping. Regional organizations can face political, structural, financial or planning limitations. At times the impartiality or neutrality of their member States may be questioned, for historical reasons or for political or economic reasons. Nonetheless, the experience in Liberia clearly showed the contribution that can be made by a subregional organization such as ECOWAS when dealing with so complex a situation, and the key role that the United Nations can play in support of such efforts. Judgement and caution must be exercised in associating the United Nations with regional, subregional or multinational efforts but the potential for positive cooperation should continue to be explored.

45. *Strengthening Africa's capacity for peacekeeping.* Reinforcing the capacity of African countries to operate in peacekeeping missions remains a key priority, whether those operations take place in the framework of a United Nations peacekeeping mission or one authorized by the Security Council but conducted by a regional organization or group of States. In looking to future strategies for enhancing Africa's capacity for peacekeeping, the proposals developed in consultation with OAU officials and tabled in my predecessor's report (A/50/711-S/1995/911) remain valid. Those proposals relate to practical steps that can be taken in the areas of training assistance, joint peacekeeping exercises, greater African participation in the United Nations standby arrangements, partnerships between countries whose contingents require equipment and donors that are able to assist, and closer cooperation between the United Nations and OAU. These efforts are not in any way intended to relieve the broader international community of its collective obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, but rather within the framework of those responsibilities to make Africa's own contribution more effective. In this context, I strongly encourage all Member States to contribute to the United Nations and OAU trust funds established to improve preparedness for conflict prevention and peacekeeping in Africa.

Ensuring a consistent approach

46. Creating clearer criteria and a more predictable basis for determining when the Security Council is likely to support the deployment of peacekeeping operations is urgently needed. Failure to act in the face of serious threats to peace and human lives in Africa threatens the credibility and legitimacy of the United Nations not only in the area of peace and security but also in other areas of its work. Moreover, wide disparities in the international community's

commitment to preventing or containing conflicts in different regions impede the ability of the United Nations to promote a stable and just international order anywhere. Member States must be engaged in terms of political will and practical resources if the viability of the United Nations and the principles for which it stands are to be safeguarded, let alone advanced.

C. Humanitarian assistance

47. In Africa as elsewhere, the changing nature of conflict requires new responses. During the cold war era there was a certain predictability in the way political and humanitarian mechanisms could be used to respond to crises shaped by competing bi-polar interests. On the humanitarian front, standard approaches were used to help people who sought asylum across borders. Assistance was provided in the relative security of camps or settlements outside the immediate war zone. In situations of famine, which were seen primarily as natural disasters compounded by politics (and not the reverse), there was a momentum to help people cope with food deficiencies.

48. Crises today, particularly in Africa, have become much more complex, having many dimensions at once and involving many actors. Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and anti-government forces all have an important impact on humanitarian situations, and humanitarian action can have important political, social, economic and environmental repercussions as well. A principled and coordinated approach to humanitarian assistance will best address humanitarian needs and facilitate the preparation of a coherent and effective strategy for recovery and reconstruction. The humanitarian community and the international community at large need now to take a hard look at how humanitarian assistance is provided, and for what purposes.

Humanitarian imperatives

49. *Protecting civilians in situations of conflict.* All combatants must abide by universal humanitarian principles. Unfortunately, clear rules have not always translated into an equally clear acceptance of those rules. In recent decades, there has been a dramatic and unacceptable deterioration in the level of adherence to humanitarian norms in crisis situations. Governments have often treated armed opponents and their supporters with indiscriminate and ruthless ferocity. Anti-government forces are often willing to employ any and all means that might advance their end. In the past, civilian populations were chiefly indirect victims of fighting between hostile armies. Today, they are often the main targets, with women suffering in disproportionate numbers while often also being subjected to atrocities that include organized rape and sexual exploitation. Increasingly, relief workers, including United Nations staff, have also been directly targeted. Such attacks are unconscionable and undermine the basic conditions of humanitarian assistance.

50. The monitoring and reporting of respect for human rights is a critical responsibility of the international community. Adherence to international humanitarian and human rights norms by all parties to a conflict must be insisted upon, and I intend to make this a priority in the work of the United Nations. In order to make warring parties more accountable for their actions, I recommend that combatants be held financially liable to their victims under international law where civilians are made the deliberate target of aggression. I further recommend that international legal machinery be developed to facilitate efforts to find, attach and seize the assets of transgressing parties and their leaders.

51. In working to curb war abuses, human rights missions can play an important role. Because voluntary contributions have in the past proved not to be an adequate basis for funding when special human rights missions have been deployed, I recommend that all special human rights missions should be funded from assessed contributions. In the strongest way possible, international pressure must be brought to bear on all warring parties to respect the human rights of civilians, including relief workers, in situations of armed conflict.

52. Special attention must be paid to the needs of children in armed conflict. The recent appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict constitutes an important first step in institutionalizing the international community's focus on this important issue. Targeting children for attack and recruiting or abducting them into militia forces are terrible crimes that must be specifically addressed in any future war crimes statutes or prosecutions. I endorse the notion of children as "zones of peace", and urge that this concept be expanded. Negotiating temporary ceasefires to allow children in war zones to be vaccinated, for example, or to allow food supplies to pass through confrontation lines has proved useful in a number of conflict situations. This practice should be raised to a tenet of international humanitarian law.

53. *Addressing refugee security issues.* Persons fleeing persecution or war deserve refuge and assistance. The safety of refugees has increasingly become a matter of international concern, as has the security of States hosting large refugee

populations or having such populations near their borders. The potential threat to African States posed by the movement of large numbers of refugees when they are mingled with combatants must be acknowledged. In the area of the Great Lakes, the movement of large numbers of Rwandan refugees into neighbouring countries became a destabilizing factor for those countries, as well as for the new Government in Rwanda. Despite appeals from my predecessor and from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the international community failed to support efforts to separate former combatants from non-combatant refugees who had ensconced themselves on the territory of the former Zaire, along its border with Rwanda. As a result, combatants hiding among refugee populations remain, even today, a source of insecurity throughout the region.

54. Every effort should be made to ensure that all refugees and internally displaced persons are adequately protected and provided for, in accordance with internationally recognized rules and procedures. Refugee camps and settlements must be kept free of any military presence or equipment, including arms and ammunition. Where there is a massive influx of people in need of asylum, immediate measures should be taken to separate the civilian population from soldiers and militiamen. The latter should be quartered separately and the neutrality and humanitarian character of the camps and settlements scrupulously maintained. Action is also required to address the special needs and vulnerabilities of women and children in such situations. For their own security, and the security of the States from which they fled, I strongly urge that refugees be settled at a reasonable distance from any border, in camps of limited size, in accordance with the OAU Refugee Convention. Where host countries have been generous enough not to require refugees to live in camps, local communities should be provided with additional support.

55. Some of the requirements relating to the protection of refugees and the support of States hosting large refugee populations are beyond the capacity of humanitarian providers. Many relate to matters of international peace and security for which the Security Council has primary responsibility. I therefore urge the establishment of an international mechanism to assist host Governments in maintaining the security and neutrality of refugee camps and settlements. Such a mechanism might encompass training, logistics, financial support, the provision of security personnel and the monitoring of national security arrangements. An important initiative with these objectives in mind has recently been launched by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to address security issues among Burundian refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania.

56. *Mitigating the social and environmental impact of refugees on host countries*. The international community often does not adequately take into account the severe social and environmental consequences that the presence of large numbers of long-term refugees may have in many African countries. In Guinea, which has the highest per capita refugee population in the world, as much as 10 per cent of the population are refugees from neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone, and many have been in the country for a number of years. This massive presence of refugees has had profound effects on Guinea, devastating forests in some areas and often overstretching the facilities of local communities. The increased presence of street children in many areas and the inability of the local economy to absorb able-bodied persons into the workforce has resulted in rising social tensions. The burden placed on local infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and sanitation facilities has also been considerable. Former combatants mingled among refugees have also helped to fuel the illicit trafficking of small arms. While continuing to encourage African countries to receive and provide for refugees, the international community must also acknowledge and assist the tremendous effort that many countries are currently making.

57. *Humanitarian coordination*. The coordination of humanitarian assistance still remains one of the greatest challenges facing the international community as it struggles to respond more effectively to the changing nature of today's complex conflicts. The need to achieve consensus among the multiplicity of actors – each with their own mandates, funding, approach and agenda – makes humanitarian coordination extremely difficult. Moreover, some actors have been reluctant to establish coordination mechanisms almost as a matter of principle. I am determined to ensure that United Nations humanitarian action is fully consistent with broader United Nations peace and development activities, and that our humanitarian action is coordinated. The recently established Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, convened by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, is intended to advance this objective. In the context of peacekeeping or peace-building operations, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator in the field will operate under the overall authority of my representative or special representative in the country, and will ensure that the head of mission is kept fully informed on humanitarian issues.

Special challenges of humanitarian assistance

58. *Is assistance facilitating political inaction?* Providing assistance to the victims of conflict is a moral imperative. It is one of the core functions of the United Nations system. Humanitarian assistance today often raises difficult challenges, however – morally, politically and operationally. In part this is because humanitarian assistance is an emergency response that addresses only the symptoms of conflict, not the causes. Humanitarian assistance cannot stop a conflict, and the diversion or abuse of humanitarian assistance may well prolong it. Of special concern is the fact that humanitarian assistance is sometimes treated as a substitute for political action rather than as a supplement. In some cases the vulnerability of humanitarian actors on the ground has even been used as the primary reason for not taking the necessary political action. In situations of conflict the purposes of humanitarian operations, as well as their limitations, need to be better understood by the public and constantly recalled, so that they do not serve as an excuse for political inaction.

59. *Is assistance helping to fuel the conflict?* Humanitarian actors are now often required to negotiate access in volatile and dangerous environments, and to fend off efforts by both Governments and their opponents to use humanitarian assistance as a tool to achieve political goals, make economic gains or sustain their fighting capacity. Ensuring that the abuse of humanitarian assistance does not end up prolonging the conflict is one of the greatest challenges facing humanitarian actors in today's conflicts. The looting of humanitarian supplies and vehicles has become an all too frequent occurrence. Not only does this provide sustenance to combatants but, in the case of vehicles, cash and other valuable items, it may give them additional means to prolong or intensify the conflict. In Liberia, over $8 million in property – including nearly 500 vehicles – was looted from United Nations and non-governmental organization premises during the fighting that took place in April and May 1996. In the days and months that followed, combatants were often seen transporting themselves in those stolen vehicles while a flourishing black market developed in property stolen from the United Nations and other international organizations in the country.

60. *Are resources being diverted from other critical priorities?* Of particular concern, especially to the host country, is the extent to which humanitarian expenditures diminish the pool of funds that might be available for other critical national priorities. In the Great Lakes region immense sums have been spent on humanitarian relief in recent years, though this assistance is often perceived by countries in the region as having very little impact on the issues that lie at the heart of the problems there. Many fear that the assistance may come at the expense of efforts to address root causes – a sentiment that is fuelled, for example, by the extreme funding difficulties that have surrounded the war crimes Tribunal in Arusha, and by the lack of support so far given to a number of key reconstruction and development priorities identified by the Government of Rwanda. This concern heightens the importance of ensuring a rational allocation of resources between humanitarian relief and development assistance.

61. *Does the multiplicity of actors and mandates impede the provision of effective assistance?* The multiplicity of humanitarian actors and mandates operating in any given crisis is one of the striking characteristics of modern conflicts. This reflects a commendable human desire to respond to suffering, but it often entails overlap and duplication of activity that can sometimes amount to competition and rivalry. The multiplicity of actors and the failure at times to achieve consensus on operations or objectives has sometimes impeded rather than advanced humanitarian goals. It is clear that for humanitarian assistance to be most effective there must be cooperation and coordination among humanitarian actors.

Relating emergency assistance to reconstruction and development

62. Unless there is reconstruction and development in the aftermath of conflict, there can be little expectation of progress or durable peace. Rehabilitation, reconstruction and recovery cannot await the completion of the peace process, however. Relief efforts must be a step towards development, and must be delivered in ways that promote, rather than compromise, long-term development objectives. Successful rehabilitation efforts require a mix of activities – some are quick-starting actions that relief staff familiar with the local situation are well placed to carry out, while others are longer-term actions that need to evolve smoothly into development efforts. What is needed during this phase is not a passing of batons from relief to development assistance, but rather partnerships in which each group brings its particular expertise and capacity to bear on the appropriate parts of the rehabilitation problem in a manner that is consistent and well coordinated.

D. Post-conflict peace-building

63. By post-conflict peace-building, I mean actions undertaken at the end of a conflict to consolidate peace and prevent a recurrence of armed confrontation. Experience has

shown that the consolidation of peace in the aftermath of conflict requires more than purely diplomatic and military action, and that an integrated peace-building effort is needed to address the various factors that have caused or are threatening a conflict. Peace-building may involve the creation or strengthening of national institutions, monitoring elections, promoting human rights, providing for reintegration and rehabilitation programmes, and creating conditions for resumed development. Peace-building does not replace ongoing humanitarian and development activities in countries emerging from crisis. It aims rather to build on, add to, or reorient such activities in ways designed to reduce the risk of a resumption of conflict and contribute to creating the conditions most conducive to reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery.

64. The crucial underlying need in post-conflict peace-building situations is the security of ordinary people, in the form of real peace and access to basic social facilities. In pursuing these peace-building objectives, a number of requirements are clear. First, time is of the essence. Second, a multifaceted approach, covering diplomatic, political and economic factors, must be adopted. Third, the effort must be adequately financed. Fourth, there must be high-level strategic and administrative coordination among the many actors.

The transition to post-conflict peace-building

65. A smooth and early transition to post-conflict peace-building is critical, and I urge the Security Council to look favourably on the establishment of post-conflict peace-building support structures similar to the one in Liberia. Even prior to the end of the conflict, there must be a clear assessment of key post-conflict peace-building needs and of ways to meet them. Peace-building elements should be explicitly and clearly identified and integrated into the mandates of the peacekeeping operation. When a peacekeeping operation comes to an end, the concluding mandate should include specific recommendations for the transitional period to the post-conflict phase.

The priorities of post-conflict peace-building

66. Societies that have emerged from conflict have special needs. To avoid a return to conflict while laying a solid foundation for development, emphasis must be placed on critical priorities such as encouraging reconciliation and demonstrating respect for human rights; fostering political inclusiveness and promoting national unity; ensuring the safe, smooth and early repatriation and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons; reintegrating ex-combatants and others into productive society; curtailing the availability of small arms; and mobilizing the domestic and international resources for reconstruction and economic recovery. Every priority is linked to every other, and success will require a concerted and coordinated effort on all fronts.

Financing recovery

67. Where a country's capacity to develop and implement a comprehensive economic programme has been disrupted by conflict, consideration must be given to relaxing the normally strict financial conditions imposed by international lending institutions. Conflict prevention, including post-conflict peace-building, may require an urgent infusion of funds to support a fragile State during a delicate political transition. It is particularly necessary to avoid situations in which conditionalities are imposed that are antithetical to a peace process, or in which international financial institutions and the donor community cut off funds from a weak Government making, in good faith, a popularly supported effort to pursue reconciliation or implement peace agreements. Where economic reform is needed it is necessary to consider how best to provide for a "peace-friendly" structural adjustment programme while easing the conditionality that normally accompanies loans from the Bretton Woods institutions.

68. Where conflict has recently ended, bilateral and multilateral development agencies can make a distinct contribution by directing their assistance to areas which will facilitate the rapid re-establishment of income-earning activities. Special attention should also be paid to quick-impact micro-projects, especially when they include training and other capacity-building activities that can facilitate the reintegration of ex-combatants, refugees and displaced persons into their communities. The sooner the communities are stabilized, the more durable the peace.

Working towards a coordinated international response

69. The multidimensional nature of post-conflict peace-building demands effective coordination. In Liberia, where circumstances continue to require extraordinary support from the international community, the first United Nations Peace-building Support Office has been established. The Office is intended to strengthen and harmonize United Nations post-conflict peace-building efforts, while also helping to mobilize international political support for the country's reconstruction and recovery, and assisting Liberians in their efforts to promote reconciliation and respect for human rights. The Representative of the

Secretary-General will be responsible for ensuring a consistent policy approach by the entire United Nations system. The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Liberia will be the Deputy to the Representative of the Secretary-General, and will continue to be responsible for the operational coordination of development activities carried out by the United Nations system. The Resident Coordinator will keep the Representative of the Secretary-General fully informed about relevant activities or initiatives of the United Nations, and will provide continuity once the mandate of the Office has ended.

70. In some situations of conflict or post-conflict peace-building, a "strategic framework" approach may also be appropriate, providing the basis for a coherent effort by the entire United Nations system in countries in crisis. The strategic framework would especially embrace political, human rights, humanitarian and development activities aimed at promoting a durable peace and sustainable development. Such an effort would encompass all partners in the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as national authorities, donor organizations and non-governmental organizations.

IV. Building a durable peace and promoting economic growth

A. Good governance

71. The difficult relations between State and society in Africa owe much to the authoritarian legacy of colonial governance. Because there was little need to seek political legitimacy, the colonial State did not encourage representation or participation. The result was often social and political fragmentation, and a sometimes weak and dependent civil society. A number of African States have continued to rely on centralized and highly personalized forms of government and some have also fallen into a pattern of corruption, ethnically based decisions and human rights abuses. Notwithstanding the holding of multiparty elections in a majority of African countries, much more must be done to provide an environment in which individuals feel protected, civil society is able to flourish, and Government carries out its responsibilities effectively and transparently, with adequate institutional mechanisms to ensure accountability.

Securing respect for human rights and the rule of law

72. Respect for human rights and the rule of law are necessary components of any effort to make peace durable. They are cornerstones of good governance. By signalling its commitment to respecting human rights, a Government can demonstrate its commitment to building a society in which all can live freely. I welcome the recent endorsement by the OAU Council of Ministers of proposals for the establishment of an African court on human and peoples' rights. I call upon all African countries that have not done so to ratify United Nations and African instruments on human rights, and to embody those instruments in national law as a matter of priority.

73. Government actions will speak the loudest, but important signals can also be sent. One signal might be the development of a national plan of action for human rights aimed, for example, at advancing the ratification of human rights treaties, reviewing and amending legislation to ensure that human rights are adequately protected, and promoting human rights training of judges, police officers, lawyers and prison officials. The establishment of credible, independent and impartial national human rights institutions can be a significant confidence-building measure, and should be reinforced by the development of indigenous non-governmental human rights organizations and institutions. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is available to assist Governments in drafting national plans of action for human rights, establishing human rights commissions, or implementing human rights objectives. Civic education by government, non-governmental organizations, the media and others is important and should inform people about their civic rights and legal protections while also explaining civic responsibilities.

74. Guaranteeing the fair and impartial enforcement of the law is indispensable to the protection of human rights. This requires respecting the autonomy, integrity and independence of the courts, and ensuring fair and impartial enforcement of the law by the police and State security services. If individuals or groups, including agents of the State, can act with impunity and escape punishment, citizens will live in fear of arbitrary arrest and detention. If the law is applied only selectively and is particularly harsh on certain groups, it creates resentment and fosters the environment for a violent response. Strengthening judicial institutions is a very important way in which the international community can help African countries to promote good governance.

Promoting transparency and accountability in public administration

75. Corruption is a serious worldwide phenomenon. It has critically hobbled and skewed Africa's development. Addressing the problem of corruption requires targeting both payer and recipient. I welcome the recent initiative of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development to reduce the scope for corruption in aid-funded procurement. I also welcome the signing of the Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions, which commits signatories to introducing legislation defining bribery and sanctions to punish it. These are important first steps, but much more still needs to be done. African Governments in particular must get tough on this issue, and make the fight against corruption a genuine priority. The costs of not doing so are very high – in lost resources, lost foreign investment, distorted decision-making, and failing public confidence. I call for agreement on a timetable for the early enactment of legislation in countries implementing the Convention, and call upon OAU to devise by the year 2000 a uniform African convention on the conduct of public officials and the transparency of public administration.

Enhancing administrative capacity

76. Good governance also requires the effective management of resources. Improved public sector management in Africa must therefore continue to be a high priority for the United Nations system and for African Governments. Existing efforts cover many sectors and operate at many levels. The Bretton Woods institutions have a special role to play, especially in working with African countries to reform public institutions in the financial sector and to support the development of transparent economic and regulatory procedures and practices. A strong central bank capacity, an efficient customs unit and well-managed government regulatory institutions are vital prerequisites for stable macroeconomic performance and the building of investor confidence.

Strengthening democratic governance

77. Democratic government helps to guarantee political rights, protect economic freedoms and foster an environment where peace and development can flourish. Today, as never before, countries around the world are seeking to establish pluralistic systems of government in which political leaders are elected by the will of the majority to fixed terms of office, and exercise their authority within legal limits. This is a very hopeful trend that bodes well for Africa's future, because in the absence of genuinely democratic institutions contending interests are likely to seek to settle their differences through conflict rather than through accommodation.

78. Democratization gives people a stake in society. Its importance cannot be overstated, for unless people feel that they have a true stake in society lasting peace will not be possible and sustainable development will not be achieved. Ensuring that people feel represented in the political life of their societies is essential, and in Africa democratization can often build upon positive indigenous structures and traditional ways of inclusive governance. Elections play a central role in democratization efforts in Africa and elsewhere and this focus must remain strong; but elections must also be part of a long-term undertaking that will lead to a strengthening of national institutions and democratic processes. The real test of a democratization process is not the organization of first elections, but whether those first elections are followed by others in accordance with an agreed electoral timetable.

B. Sustainable development

79. Development is a human right, and the principal long-term objective of all countries in Africa. Development is also central to the prospects for reducing conflict in Africa. A number of African States have made good progress towards sustainable development in recent years, but others continue to struggle. Poor economic performance or inequitable development have resulted in a near-permanent economic crisis for some States, greatly exacerbating internal tensions and greatly diminishing their capacity to respond to those tensions. In many African countries painful structural adjustment programmes have led to a significant reduction in social spending and consequent reductions in the delivery of many of the most basic social services. Especially when this is coupled with a perception that certain groups are not receiving a fair share of diminishing resources, the potential for conflict is evident.

80. While economic growth does not guarantee stability, satisfaction or social peace, without growth there can be no sustained increase in household or government spending, in private or public capital formation, in health or social welfare. The basic strategy for achieving sustainable development through economic growth is now well established. The core components of the strategy include macroeconomic stability and a stable investment environment; integration into the international economy; a reliance on the private sector as the driving force for

economic growth; long-term foreign direct investment, especially in support of export-oriented activities; adequate investment in human development areas such as health and education; a fair and reliable legal framework; and the maintenance of basic physical infrastructures. Despite the broad consensus on how development and economic growth should be pursued, however, in Africa it has been difficult to achieve rapid progress, partly because of the failed policies pursued in the past by many African countries and the difficult international economic environment in which they generally must operate.

Creating a positive environment for investment and economic growth

81. *Creating a positive environment for investment.* To produce sustained economic growth, African countries must create and maintain an enabling environment for investment. The world economic system is highly competitive and market-based, and Africa has become largely marginalized in recent years in attracting significant inflows of long-term foreign direct investment. The importance of investment in small and medium-sized businesses should also be emphasized as such enterprises are an important source of employment in Africa and contribute significantly to the continent's GDP. If Africa is to participate fully in the global economy, political and economic reform must be carried out. It must include predictable policies, economic deregulation, openness to trade, rationalized tax structures, adequate infrastructure, transparency and accountability, and protection of property rights.

82. *Enacting needed reforms.* Many Governments are in the process of successfully implementing necessary reforms, and some already enjoy stronger growth as a result. Others continue to struggle and several have yet to complete the first generation of economic reforms, which include fiscal consolidation, privatization and deregulation programmes, trade liberalization, and policies to promote investment in human capital and economic infrastructures. These reforms need to be put in place without delay. They should be accompanied by determined efforts to stamp out corrupt practices and implement other civil service reforms that will improve the ability of government to carry out its functions.

83. Long-term success can be achieved only if African Governments have the political will not just to enact sound economic policies but also to persevere in their implementation until a solid economic foundation has been established. This will happen only if there is greater public understanding of the measures required, and broad-based political support for those measures. Therefore, I urge the convening of national conventions on economic restructuring and reform in countries where serious adjustment is required, for the purpose of considering and explaining the need and likely ramifications of various aspects of structural adjustment. Those conventions might also suggest modifications warranted by local conditions.

84. *Drawing attention to progress and new opportunities.* Where progress is being made it should be acknowledged publicly. Virtually none of the major investment guides includes information on Africa. For my part, I intend to hold, in collaboration with the Secretary-General of OAU, regular meetings with senior business leaders worldwide to discuss with them ways of promoting large-scale long-term investment in growth-promoting sectors in Africa. I intend to focus special attention on multi-country infrastructure projects and projects for the exploitation of shared natural resources, as called for in the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. On the basis of those consultations, I will recommend appropriate follow-up actions to be taken by national Governments, the United Nations system and other institutions.

Emphasizing social development

85. Too often, the majority of those living in the developing world appear to be incidental to development rather than its focus. Ultimately, all development strategies should be measured by the benefit they bring to the majority of citizens, while the value of particular development tactics should be measured by the extent to which they will contribute to that end. Governments should review their priorities and distribution decisions, focusing on basic human needs and placing primary emphasis on reducing poverty. The international community needs to work for social development with all of the tools at its disposal, ensuring that greater sensitivity to social development issues is matched by increased financing for anti-poverty efforts and for social development needs.

86. *Investing in human resources.* Just as investment in physical capital is necessary to generate economic growth, so too investment in human resources must be recognized not merely as a by-product of economic growth but as a driving force for development. Investment in human development is an investment in long-term competitiveness, and a necessary component of a stable and progressing society. Education, for example, not only increases employment options and capacities but it also enables individuals to make broader, better and more informed choices in all aspects of life, health and culture. Technical and professional training lays an essential foundation for the

acquisition of skills, and for renewing, adapting or changing those skills to better suit the evolving needs of individuals and societies.

87. *Public health priorities*. Africa faces an increasingly serious public health crisis, which may also have serious consequences for development. It is the result of the worsening impact of endemic diseases such as malaria, together with the re-emergence of diseases like tuberculosis and poliomyelitis and the continuing devastation caused by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Many deaths could be prevented by vaccinations or effective preventive measures, and by investing in improved sanitation and basic health care. In the case of HIV/AIDS, two thirds of the people infected worldwide are in sub-Saharan Africa. New treatments are available that can very substantially reduce the chances of pregnant mothers transmitting the HIV virus to their unborn children, while better education on how to prevent the transmission of the disease would also have a significant impact. I call for a new focus by Africa and the international community on reducing the mortality rate of treatable and preventable diseases, and urge that consideration also be given to the use of emergency and humanitarian resources for this purpose. I appeal for substantial additional research into new prevention and treatment techniques for diseases such as malaria, which kills millions of people in Africa each year, many of them babies and children. I urge the pharmaceutical industry to work with African countries and the World Health Organization to set a timetable for achieving more affordable access by Africa to life-saving and life-enhancing drugs, including drugs for the treatment of HIV/AIDS.

88. *Focusing on social justice*. The eradication of poverty requires development in which access to the benefits of economic progress is as widely available as possible, and not concentrated excessively in certain localities, sectors or groups of the population. Economic growth does not by itself ensure that benefits will be equitably distributed, that the poor and most vulnerable will be protected or that greater equality of opportunity will be pursued. Attention to social justice is vital if development and economic growth are to produce positive results and if society is to develop in a balanced way. If only a small fraction of education resources are spent on primary education while millions remain uneducated and illiterate, and only a small fraction of expenditures on health care go for basic health services and facilities while millions suffer from easily treatable or preventable diseases, development will have little meaning. If social protections are available only to the urban minority, and lack of access overall translates into a practical lack of rights, development can only be a relative term. If economic opportunities are focused exclusively on urban centres while rural life is degraded and destroyed, turmoil and social disintegration will be the price of change. Development and spending priorities need to be broad-based, equitable and inclusive.

89. *Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women*. Investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is a vital and certain way to advance economic and social development. Equality of rights, opportunities and access to resources between men and women are fundamental requirements. Measures must be taken to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls. Institutional barriers that prevent the exercise of equal rights need to be identified and removed through comprehensive policy reform. In some countries married women still remain under the permanent guardianship of their husbands and have no right to manage property. The equalization of laws for men and women, particularly those relating to property, inheritance and divorce, is a pressing need in a number of African countries. I strongly urge all countries that have not done so to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and to do so without reservation.

Restructuring international aid

90. In Africa, long-term international aid programmes have not achieved the development goals for which they were established. Dramatic cuts in assistance to Africa have been registered in recent years. This trend has hurt rather than helped Africa's efforts to implement the difficult economic and political reforms which are now under way across the continent. Appropriate and effective aid levels need to be established. In conjunction with this, development assistance needs to be restructured, focusing on high impact areas and on reducing dependency. Attention should be directed both to the means for transmitting assistance and to its ends. It is worth noting, for example, that because urban water supply is given preference over rural services, less than 20 per cent of aid for water and sanitation services goes to rural areas or to low-cost mass-coverage programmes. Because higher education is given preference over primary schooling, less than 20 per cent of aid expenditures for education go to primary education. Because urban hospitals are given preference over primary health care, only about 30 per cent of aid for health care goes for basic health services and facilities.

91. The manner in which technical assistance is provided also needs to be critically re-examined. Technical assistance as it was originally conceived was designed to close the

technical capacity gap between industrial and developing countries by accelerating the transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise, thereby building national capacity. In some cases this has been done but, in many others, technical assistance has had precisely the opposite effect, reining in rather than unleashing national capacity. It has been observed that today, after more than 40 years of technical assistance programmes, 90 per cent of the $12 billion a year spent on technical assistance is still spent on foreign expertise – despite the fact that national experts are now available in many fields.

92. In line with the objectives outlined above, I call for an immediate examination of how best to restructure international aid to reduce dependency, promote primary social development objectives such as clean drinking water, basic literacy and health care, and reinforce efforts to make African economies more stable and competitive. First and foremost, I urge all donors to strive to ensure that at least 50 per cent of their aid to Africa is spent in Africa, and to make information on the expenditure of aid funds more easily accessible to the public. Greater aid for infrastructure development in Africa, including road and rail networks, telecommunications capacities, computer systems and port facilities, would leave a tangible mark while generating employment, expertise and revenues in Africa itself.

Reducing debt burdens

93. *An unsustainable burden of debt.* Many States in Africa lack the financial capital needed to address basic expectations and fundamental needs. This is one of the central crises of Africa today, and one that is due in large measure to the problem of Africa's public sector debt. When tensions rise or conflict threatens, many African countries do not have the basic resources to meet critical needs. In 1995, Africa's external debt totalled $328.9 billion – of which approximately 45 per cent was owed to official bilateral sources, 30 per cent to official multilateral sources, and 25 per cent to commercial lenders. To service this debt fully, African countries would have had to pay to donors and external commercial lenders more than 60 per cent ($86.3 billion) of the $142.3 billion in revenues generated from their exports. In fact, African countries as a whole actually paid more than 17 per cent ($25.4 billion) of their total export earnings to donors and external commercial lenders, leaving a total of $60.9 billion in unpaid accumulated arrears.

94. *The need for additional action on debt.* Addressing the threat that an unsustainable debt burden poses to the economic security and long-term stability of Africa requires comprehensive and decisive action by the international community. Debt relief granted by the international community should promote and reinforce economic reforms. It should be structured in ways that will not undermine Africa's future capacity to attract investment, but will instead enhance that capacity by lifting past burdens from present operations. The recent Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative is a promising step. The principle behind the Initiative is that the international community would reduce the debt burden of poor countries, following the implementation of internationally accepted programmes of reform, to a level that would no longer hinder their economic growth and development. The results of the Initiative have been disappointing, however. At present, only four African countries meet its requirements.

95. Significant movement on lifting Africa's crippling debt burden will require concerted political action at the highest levels. It is evident that in development terms Africa has far too little to show for the burden of debt that has now accumulated. Africa cannot avoid its share of responsibility for the present debt predicament, but the international community needs to acknowledge its own role in creating this problem. During the cold war bilateral and multilateral loans were often linked mainly to geopolitical priorities, purchasing political peace and stability in areas of interest to the super-Powers or their principal allies. In many cases bilateral loans provided the funds for extensive military expenditures by African countries. Across Africa, Governments were sometimes pressured into accepting a wide range of loans which they did not need and could not productively utilize. In many cases little or no effort was made to ensure accountability for expenditures, despite clear reasons for lenders to expect that substantial sums were likely to be diverted or misappropriated.

96. *A framework for action on debt.* The Organization of African Unity has called for an international agreement to clear the entire debt stock for the poorest countries in Africa within a reasonably short period of time, and in the context of Africa's overall economic reforms. I urge that this appeal to help African countries to escape from the debt trap be given the most serious consideration. I also urge that two immediate steps be taken towards that end. First, I call upon all creditor countries to convert into grants all the remaining official bilateral debt of the poorest African countries. Second, I call upon the international financial institutions to significantly ease and quicken access to facilities for heavily indebted poor countries, and to provide countries with sufficient resources to enable them to attain a substantial and sustained pace of economic growth and social development.

Opening international markets

97. *Access to markets.* All countries are now part of an international trading system, but many remain imperfectly integrated into it while others are excessively vulnerable to its instability. Long-term sustained growth in Africa will depend largely upon the capacity of Africa to diversify exports and to achieve export-led growth in manufactures alongside the production of primary commodities. The transition to export-led growth will require not only sustained internal policy reform backed by macroeconomic stability and debt reduction, but also enhanced and guaranteed access to developed country markets as well as improved regional South-South cooperation. Africa's manufacturing competitiveness lies in part in items such as agro-based industries as well as apparel and textiles which are politically sensitive in developed countries. Although the average level of tariffs on Africa's major exports was reduced in the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, more progress is needed. Particularly troubling is the problem of "tariff escalation", whereby tariffs on some agriculture- and natural-resource-based products increase in proportion to the degree of processing before export. This phenomenon serves to discourage and penalize African efforts to develop, and should be eliminated with respect to African products.

98. Special efforts are needed by the developed economies to ensure access for competitive African goods, even in the face of domestic political lobbies resisting increased competition. I urge that the question of eliminating trade barriers to African products be placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the group of major industrialized countries, with a view to the adoption of a common policy to be implemented on a bilateral basis and through the World Trade Organization.

99. *Adjusting to a globally competitive trade environment.* With respect to Africa's own progress on tariff reduction, the international community should be sensitive to the possible impact of tariff reduction on budget revenues, fiscal deficits, macroeconomic instability and debt service burden. Assistance will be necessary to enable African countries to sustain the tariff reductions and economic reforms on which they have already embarked. Africa also requires special support to deal with the imposition of new and emerging non-tariff barriers such as new environmental, health and labour standards. Many African economies need not only greater access to the international market but also to remove domestic constraints which limit their capacity to take advantage of existing opportunities offered through the Uruguay Round agreements. The international community should also direct its assistance to the development of productive capacity in Africa and the enhancement of the competitiveness of industries on the continent.

Support for regional cooperation and integration

100. Small markets, high transaction and transportation costs, and lack of sufficient communication links are significant factors impeding the expansion of economic activity for many African countries. Greater regional cooperation and integration could help to limit some of those obstacles while enabling many countries to achieve collectively what each would be unable to achieve on its own. Also, the closer the economic ties among States members of subregional or regional groupings, the greater the effort likely to be devoted to preventing disputes and tensions from turning into conflicts. In the past, a range of political, institutional and physical constraints have hampered efforts to promote greater regional integration in Africa. They have included ideological differences, nationalistic policies, the non-convertibility of national currencies, tariff and non-tariff barriers, differences in legal institutions and frameworks and sometimes the lack of basic infrastructure such as roads, telecommunications facilities and transport.

101. Today, a number of important factors favour efforts at greater regional and subregional cooperation. These include the Abuja Treaty, the efforts by many Governments to encourage private sector development, the convergence in macroeconomic policies resulting from the adoption of structural adjustment programmes by a large number of African countries, and the common challenge presented by the formation of new trade blocs in other regions of the world. Still greater policy convergence and harmonization are required if these efforts are truly to gain momentum. Specific activities at the subregional level could include cooperative projects that link two or more countries – common economic enterprise zones, common infrastructure projects, or joint tourism efforts, for example. To reinforce national economic efforts, I call upon African countries – with the support of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as the European Union and others – to examine ways in which regional and subregional integration can be used to promote economic discipline and sound macroeconomic policy, and facilitate the establishment of solid institutional and confidence-building links between neighbouring States.

102. I also call upon African countries to give priority to establishing uniform standards for equipment and facilities relevant to subregional interactions. Significant progress will also require a more genuinely supportive attitude on the part

of donors and trading partners, particularly with regard to the development of common standards and equipment among neighbouring countries. Too often, preferential arrangements with bilateral external partners result in a multiplicity of incompatible standards, technologies and equipment, thereby hindering genuine integration.

Harmonizing current international and bilateral initiatives

103. Coordination among donors, both multilateral and bilateral, is essential and should be continually re-evaluated until the assistance that is offered to Africa proves more successful in reducing poverty and promoting economic growth than in the past. To be meaningful, this effort will need to include not just the assistance provided by international financial institutions but also bilateral assistance, which is by far the largest component of international development assistance. A number of important multilateral initiatives have been launched in recent years, aimed at promoting peace and development in Africa. They include the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and its implementing complement the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, the United Nations Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, and Commitment 7 of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development. In the spirit of my reform proposals, it is necessary now to take a hard look at those initiatives and to ensure that the United Nations and its funds and programmes are working effectively together, as well as with African Governments and society, donors and non-governmental organizations.

V. Summoning the necessary political will

104. With sufficient political will – on the part of Africa and on the part of the international community – peace and development in Africa can be given a new momentum. Africa is an ancient continent. Its lands are rich and fertile enough to provide a solid foundation for prosperity. Its people are proud and industrious enough to seize the opportunities that may be presented. I am confident that Africans will not be found wanting, in stamina, in determination, or in political will. Africa today is striving to make positive change, and in many places these efforts are beginning to bear fruit. In the carnage and tragedy that afflicts some parts of Africa, we must not forget the bright spots or overlook the achievements.

105. *What is needed from Africa.* With political will, rhetoric can truly be transformed into reality. Without it, not even the noblest sentiments will have a chance of success. Three areas deserve particular attention. First, Africa must demonstrate the will to rely upon political rather than military responses to problems. Democratic channels for pursuing legitimate interests and expressing dissent must be protected, and political opposition respected and accommodated in constitutional forms. Second, Africa must summon the will to take good governance seriously, ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law, strengthening democratization, and promoting transparency and capability in public administration. Unless good governance is prized, Africa will not break free of the threat and the reality of conflict that are so evident today. Third, Africa must enact and adhere to the various reforms needed to promote economic growth. Long-term success can be achieved only if African Governments have the political will to enact sound economic policies, and to persevere in their implementation until a solid economic foundation has been established.

106. *What is needed from the international community.* Political will is also needed from the international community. Where the international community is committed to making a difference, it has proved that significant and rapid transformation can be achieved. With respect to Africa, the international community must now summon the political will to intervene where it can have an impact, and invest where resources are needed. New sources of funding are required, but so too is a better use of existing resources and the enactment of trade and debt measures that will enable Africa to generate and better reinvest its own resources. Concrete action must be taken, as it is in deeds rather than in declarations that the international community's commitment to Africa will be measured. Significant progress will require sustained international attention at the highest political levels over a period of years. To maintain the momentum for action in support of Africa, I call upon the Security Council to reconvene at ministerial level on a biennial basis so as to assess efforts undertaken and actions needed. I also urge that consideration be given to the convening of the Security Council at summit level within five years, for this purpose.

VI. Conclusion

107. In this report I set out to provide a clear and candid analysis of the sources of conflicts in Africa and the reasons why they persist. I have recommended actions and goals that are both realistic and achievable, to reduce conflict and in time help to build a strong and durable peace. I have urged Africans and non-Africans alike to summon the political will to rise to the challenge which together we must all confront. The time is long past when anyone could claim ignorance about what was happening in Africa, or what was needed to achieve progress. The time is also past when the responsibility for producing change could be shifted on to other shoulders. It is a responsibility that we must all face. The United Nations stands ready to play its part. So must the world. So must Africa.